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THE DESTRUCTION OF BELGIUM.

Germany's Confession and Avoidance.

BY

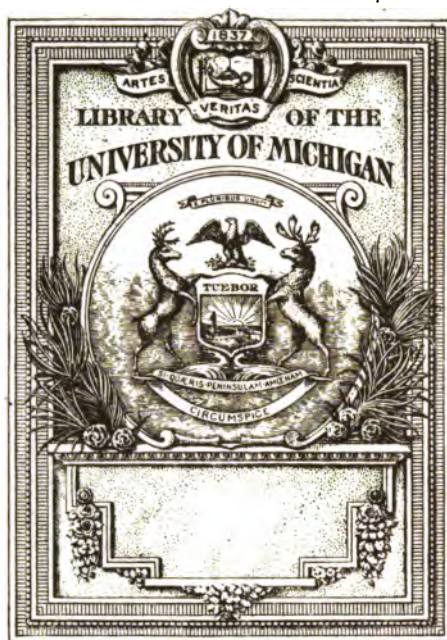
E. GRIMWOOD MEARS

One of the Joint Secretaries to the
Committee on alleged German Outrages.



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GERMANY'S CONFESSION AND
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BALTIMORE, MD.

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A REPLY TO THE GERMAN WHITE BOOK ON THE CONDUCT OF THE GERMAN TROOPS IN BELGIUM.

Very shortly after the destruction of Louvain, the German Government seem to have realised in some degree the horror with which the conduct of their Army towards the population of Belgium was regarded by civilised countries.

That massacres, murders and wholesale destruction of property had taken place were facts too stubborn to be denied. The excuse, if any existed, for these outrages had to be found, put into the most plausible shape and published to the world. An official enquiry was therefore set on foot, and a large number of witnesses were called before various tribunals. By May, 1915, the results were ripe for publication, and they have been embodied in a White Book published in Berlin under the title of "Offences against International Law in the conduct of the War by the Belgians."

It is the purpose of this paper to examine the case which has been advanced by the German Government to account for, justify, or condone the outrages of which their Army has been accused, and to see whether that case is well founded or whether in truth the explanation of the martyrdom of Belgium does not lie in a considered predetermined policy of outrage and destruction which had its impulse in the hope of forcing a speedy passage through that country. In this connection it is of vital importance to remember that the leaders of the German Army of invasion were brought up on the doctrines of General von Hartmann who deified brute force. "When international war has burst upon us," said he, "terrorism becomes a principle made necessary by military considerations" (*Militärische Nothwendigkeit*—*Deutsche Rundschau*, 1877-1878, p. 462).

The White Book itself runs to more than 300 folio pages and contains the depositions of hundreds of witnesses. With hardly an exception, they are German officers and soldiers, most of whom were directly implicated in the ordering or carrying out of massacres, and the razing of towns, villages and houses. For these admitted acts, one and the same reason is given by all these

Cardinal Mercier 10-18-16g

witnesses. In essentials their stories never vary. Every massacre of inhabitants, every organised shooting of "hostages," every wiping out of groups of people or individuals, every shelling, burning and destruction of entire towns and villages, or of single houses, always had its origin in the misdeeds of "Franco tireurs."

It must have occurred to most people that members of the German Army in the circumstances of its invasion of Belgium would from time to time be attacked by unrestrained individual civilians. That, however, is not at all the case which the Germans set out to prove. They understand that isolated acts of that character do not warrant the infliction of collective and often vicarious punishment. They affirm that great masses of the civilian population of Belgium engaged in a "people's war" with them, and that this was done generally throughout the country, not merely with the connivance, but with the assistance of the Belgian Government and military authorities, and that only such repressive measures were taken by them as were legitimate, essential, and justified by the occasion.

Before proceeding to examine the materials upon which this allegation is based, it is desirable to consider what is the charge made by the Belgians against the German Army, because the White Book is professedly an answer to the Belgian Report, and has no other object than to refute and overcome the "mendacious libels against the German Army," which are said to be contained in that document.

The Commissioners appointed by the Belgian Government issued a series of Reports between August 28th, 1914, and January 20th, 1915.⁽¹⁾ These reports, together with a most admirable and spirited preface by M. van Den Heuvel, a Belgian Minister of State; some extracts from the pastoral letter of Cardinal Mercier bearing on the subject of the German conduct in Belgium, and an appendix containing the advice given to civilians by M. Berryer, the Belgian Minister of the Interior, warning them that they must abstain from hostile action towards the Germans, formed the documents to which the German White Book purports to reply. The charges brought by the Belgian Commissioners against German officers and soldiers are pointed, precise, and definite. The reports give names, places, dates, and in many instances the number of people killed and of houses destroyed. They deal, also, with the plea that had already been advanced on behalf of the German Government that the atrocities in Belgium were the natural and legitimate outcome of the resistance offered to the invaders by armed civilians, and showed

⁽¹⁾ Other reports have been issued subsequently.

the unlikelihood, if not the practical impossibility, of any such concerted action.

The charges brought by the Belgian Commissioners against the Germans may be thus epitomised :—

- (1) That thousands of unoffending civilians, including women and children, were murdered by the Germans,
- (2) That women had been outraged.
- (3) That the custom of the German soldiers immediately on entering a town was to break into wineshops and the cellars of private houses and madden themselves with drink.
- (4) That German officers and soldiers looted on a gigantic and systematic scale, and, with the connivance of the German authorities, sent back a large part of the booty to Germany.
- (5) That the pillage had been accompanied by wanton destruction and by bestial and sacrilegious practices.
- (6) That cities, towns, villages and isolated buildings were destroyed.
- (7) That in the course of such destruction human beings were burnt alive.
- (8) That there was a uniform practice of taking hostages and thereby rendering great numbers of admittedly innocent people responsible for the alleged wrong-doings of others.
- (9) That large numbers of civilian men and women had been virtually enslaved by the Germans, being forced against their will to work for the enemies of their country, or had been carried off like cattle into Germany, where all trace of them had been lost.
- (10) That cities, towns and villages had been fined and their inhabitants maltreated because of the success gained by the Belgian over the German soldiers.
- (11) That public monuments and works of art had been wantonly destroyed by the invaders.
- (12) And that generally the Regulations of the Hague Conference and the customs of civilised warfare had been ignored by the Germans, and that amongst other breaches of such Regulations and customs the Germans had adopted a new and inhuman practice of driving Belgian men, women and children in front of them as a screen between them and the allied soldiers.

One pauses for a moment to consider the course which it was open to the German Government to pursue had they been really in a position to prove that the charges were unfounded, and that the Belgians had provoked whatever reprisals the Germans had inflicted. The first step, obviously, would have been to have appointed a Commission of neutral personages on the undertaking that every facility as to the production of contemporary documents, official and private diaries should have been put at their disposal. Further, they should have been promised that any and every witness whom they desired to see should be called before them, and that those witnesses should be given an indemnity by the German Government that no punishment should follow whatever might be the nature of their evidence. The Commissioners, as a matter of their own procedure, would undoubtedly have treated the Report of the Belgian Commission as an indictment, and having analysed it, would have proceeded to investigate the truth of the charges. Had such a method been adopted, the findings of a tribunal of that character would undoubtedly have had great weight, and its pronouncements, whether favourable or adverse to the German army, would have been accepted by the world. It is not difficult to guess why resort was not had to such a tribunal. The official correspondence, begun in January, 1915, by Colonel Wengersky with Cardinal Mercier as to the priests slain in the diocese of Malines, came to an abrupt close when the Primate suggested that a "committee of enquiry be composed equally of German delegates and Belgian "magistrates, and that it should be presided over by the representative of a neutral power."

The actual method adopted by the German Government and its agents left nothing to chance. A Bureau, wholly composed of Germans, was appointed in the Ministry of War for investigations of offences against the Laws of War. They found that the German soldiers acted with humanity, restraint, and Christian forbearance. As will be seen, the evidence demonstrates the exact opposite, and the previous records of the Germans and the military doctrines with which their army was imbued would make it difficult on *à priori* grounds to believe the statement. Before analysing in detail the contents of the White Book, it is desirable to see how their rulers and writers had approached the subject of war and to consider the terms of one or two Proclamations issued by the German Generals during the invasion of Belgium.

For the outbreak of this great war two families of Princes—the Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs—are mainly responsible. Since Frederick the Second ascended the Throne of Prussia in 1740, the Hohenzollerns, as far as cruelty and brutality to enemies

are concerned, have emulated and surpassed the Hapsburgs. It is notorious that the Kaiser has a profound admiration for Frederick the Second, commonly called Frederick the Great. In the dealings of Frederick with Silesia, and his intentions toward Saxony and Russia, the Kaiser found an almost exact precedent for the 1914 policy towards Belgium. In a letter to his Minister Podewyls he directs him to find a pretext for the invasion of Silesia. "It is time," he wrote, "you began working secretly on it, for the orders to the troops are given." He explains that he proposed to "crush Saxony" if she interfered, and if Russia proved an obstacle "we must ruin Finland, Courland, and burn everything within 20 leagues of the Prussian frontier."⁽¹⁾

In 1870-1871 the conduct of the Germans, although less reprehensible than it has been in the present War, was by no means devoid of brutality. An English soldier, Sir Edward Hamley, in a letter published in the "Times" in January, 1871, and quoted by Mr. J. O. P. Bland in his introduction to "Germany's violations of the Laws of War, 1914-15," summed up their practices in the following sentences: "The Laws of War as promulgated by the Prussians may be condensed in the case of invasion into the general axiom, that the population of the invaded country lose their rights of property and personal security, whilst the persons and effects of the invaders become absolutely sacred." That was the rule under Bismarck. The Kaiser has followed and gone beyond the traditions, either of Bismarck or Frederick the Great. In 1900, addressing the soldiers about to be despatched for the Expedition to Peking, he delivered himself of the following inhuman counsel: "When you meet the foe, you will defeat him. No quarter will be given and no prisoners will be taken. Let all who fall into your hands be at your mercy. Just as the Huns one thousand years ago, under the leadership of Etzel (Attila), gained a reputation in virtue of which they still live in historical tradition, so may the name of Germany become known in such a manner in China that no Chinaman would ever again dare to look askance at a German."⁽²⁾ Two years later, in 1902, the General Staff of the German Army published a Manual entitled: "The Laws of War on Land," which has been translated by Professor J. H. Morgan. It is certainly the most extraordinary hand book of the kind in existence: "A war conducted with energy cannot be directed merely against the combatants of the

(1) "Politische Correspondenz Friedrich der Grossen," edited by J. G. Droysen Max Duncker, Heinrich von Sybel (Berlin, 1879), Vol. 1., pp. 91-93.

(2) This striking outburst was translated by the "Times" correspondent from the Bremen Weser Zeitung, and appeared in the "Times" of July 30th, 1900, p. 5.

“enemy States and the positions they occupy, but it will, and must, in like manner seek to destroy the total intellectual and material resources of the latter. Humanitarian claims—such as protection of men and their goods, can only be taken into consideration in so far as the nature and object of the war permit. (p. 52). . . . By steeping himself in military history, an officer will be able to guard himself against excessive humanitarian notions. It will teach him that certain severities are indispensable to war, nay more, that the only true humanity very often lies in a ruthless application of them. (p. 35) What is permissible includes every means of war without which the object of the war cannot be obtained . . . ” (p. 64). A little reflection will show that if these definitions are accepted as true, every species of violence and villainy is permissible. With the officers of the German Army steeped in doctrines such as these, and uplifted by the exhortations of their Emperor, the fate which overcame Belgium is easily understood. Several of the proclamations of the German commanders which were posted up in Belgium are set out in the Belgian report. They show the spirit with which the army was animated and they are documents which it would be difficult to parallel in previous wars. On August the 17th, the burgomaster of Hasselt was forced by the German Higher Military Authorities to publish a barbarous notice, containing this sentence: “In the case of civilians shooting on the German army, a third of the male population will be shot.” On August the 22nd, General von Bülow, commanding the German Second Army, proclaimed to the Communal Authorities of Liege that it was with his “consent” that the whole town of Andenne had been “burnt down and about 100 people shot.” On the 27th of August, Lieutenant General von Nieber, in a letter to the burgomaster of Wavre, reminded him that that town had not paid the fine of £120,000 imposed upon it by the same Von Bülow: “The town of Wavre will be set on fire and destroyed if the payment is not made when due; without distinction of persons, the innocent will suffer with the guilty.”

The Belgian Government asserted that the massacres and devastation to which the witnesses spoke were the result of a deliberate system ordained by the Chiefs of the German Army. The Report also laid the greatest stress upon the drunkenness which permeated and disgraced the German Army during the first month or two of the campaign. One cannot doubt that to this cause must be assigned hundreds of murders of civilians either wholly inoffensive or who were protecting themselves from offences attempted or committed against themselves, their wives, families, or property. These individual acts must be carefully distinguished from the wholesale executions and incendiarisms

directed by officers. This charge of drunkenness emphasised, proclaimed, and reiterated as it was, should have touched the German authorities to the quick. One turned to the White Book, interested to see how it was dealt with. Will it be believed that not one of the hundreds of military witnesses makes the slightest allusion to it! In the whole of the White Book there is not one single reference to alcohol. There is not the remotest reference to intoxicants of any description, nor any hint as to the sobriety or drunkenness of the Army as a whole or of its individual units.

The examination of the witnesses was undertaken at various places by many different examiners, and the entire silence of the evidence upon such a subject convinces the reader that secret definite instructions must have been given to the examiners directing them to refrain from asking any questions on the subject, and instructing them not to receive any evidence upon it.

So calculated an omission wholly destroys the claim of the White Book to be considered a judicial document.

It cannot be said that the tribunal was in any way hampered. They had abundant opportunity of arriving at the truth. The very great majority of the witnesses were officers of the Army, whose conduct was attacked and whose honour and capacity for discipline was at stake.

The first question to each of them should have been: "What was the condition of your troops on entering and whilst in occupation of the town?" The reason why this question was never put is because the authorities did not dare to put it. The German Government knew perfectly well that there existed in permanent form conclusive records of the extent to which drunkenness invaded and dishonoured all ranks of the German Army, and that some of such records were in Belgian, French, and English hands.

Prominence had been given in the Belgian Report to the diary of Klein and to the letter to Anna Manniget. In France as the result of the examination of about 40 German diaries, Professor Bedier had already published a pamphlet entitled "*Les Crimes Allemands.*"⁽¹⁾ Had the German Government called in the

(1) A translation of this booklet, under the title of "German Atrocities from German Evidence," and also a further pamphlet entitled "How Germany seeks to Justify her Atrocities?" by the same author, are published by Hachette & Co., 18, King William Street, W.C.

diaries which, by Article 75 of the Rules of Field Service, it advises soldiers to keep, can anyone doubt that they would have revealed amazing stories of drunkenness, looting, and massacre? The German Government must have fully appreciated this and consequently no personal diaries were called for in the proceedings of the German Inquiry.

The Commission appointed by the Prime Minister, under the Presidency of Lord Bryce, examined about 90 diaries taken from German soldiers who had fallen or been taken prisoners. Those passages, which were within the scope of the Enquiry, were set out in the Appendix to the Report.⁽¹⁾ About 10 per cent. of these diaries contained references to drunkenness and pillage. They are no doubt representative specimens of the diaries kept throughout the whole Army, many thousands of which were naturally available to the German Government. A few passages from these records readily provide the reason why this source of information was not tapped by the German Government.

Corporal KÄSE.

Corporal of the Reserve KÄSE, Second Regiment of Uhlans. Gardelegen, Altmark. Entry, 17th August:—"We belong to the 7th Corps, 14th "Infantry Division, Lieutenant-General v. Flech's Corps, Commander v. "Bülow":—On the 8th Aug. at 10. Crossed Belgian frontier then rested 1 km. from Salem, where a country seat was completely robbed of its wine, so that we got into a good humour. Here we lay about four hours near the place Montrier, where we cleared out an ammunition factory.

11th Aug. [Liège].—We lay in the barracks and did not know what we should do for sheer high spirits. Some played the mouth organ—others drummed on cooking pots, others sang and whistled, and in addition we had a continuous supply of wine and champagne.

19th Aug.—Could not find regiment and remained with ammunition column. Then when we halted, plundered a villa; had much wine.

22nd Aug.—Bivouac near Anderleus. Ravaged terribly; fed magnificently.

26th Aug.—6 p.m., we went into bivouac. As invariably, the surrounding houses were immediately plundered. We found four rabbits, roasted them, dined splendidly; plates, cups, knives and forks, glasses, &c. Drank 11 bottles of champagne, four bottles of wine, and six bottles liqueur.

27th Aug.—6.30 p.m., marched out. Everyone still well loaded with wine and champagne bottles.

28th Aug.—Arrived in St. Quentin, had to bivouac in the market place. Emptied the houses; carried the beds on to the square and slept on them. Drank coffee like noblemen.

⁽¹⁾ Evidence and Documents laid before the Commission on Alleged German Outrages. Wyman & Sons, Ltd., 29, Breems Buildings, Fetter Lane, E.C.

K. BARTHEL.

[*This man worked his way up to the rank of sergeant and standard-bearer, and received the Iron Cross (2nd class)*]: "This book belongs to my father, to whom I wish it to be sent with the last greeting from a loving heart: Berlin O. 17 Frucht Str. 12/13. The 2nd Company of 1st Guard Regiment on Foot is to be permitted to see it for the purpose of complementing the war diary of the Company."

Aug. 19.—Héron. The people give us coffee, eggs and jelly, whatever they have got. They cry and embrace us. They did not want the war—yes, neither did we: our decent people are therefore behaving most respectably. At 8 o'clock in the morning, we march through Hannech: several, and particularly one serjeant-major and the non-commissioned officers, do not behave themselves as they ought to. Grass and Schutt are acting as accomplices (*Helfersdienste leisteten*) of the aforesaid serjeant-major. We have our midday rest at Hemptinne. Here we have just had wine in huge quantities from a deserted château. The men are quite mad on it. But one told me that he could not stand the sight of the stuff any more.

ERICH BUSCH.

[*This is a diary apparently of one Busch, a corporal in the 4th Company of a Jäger Regiment whose identification number was evidently 231 and gun number 118*] . . . (Between Soven and) Avanche.—I and three *oberjäger*s were quartered with 19 men in the house of the Catholic priest. He himself had cleared out. We looked through everything, fetched the wine out of the cellar and ate Army bread and drank wine with it. One bottle I had put in my pocket extra, but when I was to go on patrol this morning it fell out of my pocket and broke.

24th Aug.—We marched to a village in the neighbourhood of Maamont. In the village they plundered a shop. I also fetched out for myself some foot wraps. They struck the teacher on the head with a violin because he would not give them wine (*Dragoons*).

25th Aug.—In the morning I went into a house after wine. I fetched five bottles of wine. Two more I took along with me.

28th Aug.—Near village of Arven to-day I had at breakfast time already red wine and one bottle I still have in my bread bag.

5th Sept.—A village in the neighbourhood of La Butte. We lay in an ironfoundry. I was in command of the sentry and had with me Bulow, Pieper, Liest and Lutche. There was a shop in the house where we plundered thoroughly. From here we went to a village which we took. It was set on fire. It is called Reso- . . .

8th Sept.—Count Finkenstein had got drunk and so we could not leave . . . then the English came and took us prisoners. Of our company there will not be many left. Twenty-six men are already said to have been buried . . . they took us along with them and in a shed we got food and they also gave us water.

Joint Diary of HEINRICH CORDES and SCHWABE, both of 2nd Company
Reserve Jäger 7. 13th Division.

"I hope that we shall not have to go out again until to-night, and
"Cordes, Jaeger and I can [*enjoy ourselves, or rest*] with a good bottle of
"red wine this afternoon, of which there is so much here that one can
"literally swim."

5th Aug. 1914 [*should be 5th Sept. 1914*].—Château Bergie à Havy.
Just at this moment Heinrich [Cordes] fetches some bottles of champagne
and red and white wine out of the wine cellar, in which there are hundreds
of bottles and many casks. This is permitted by the battalion.

Jäger HANS GEORG HARWART

Bttn. of the Jagers of the Guard, 4th Company.

Aug. 24th.—A woman told us that the proprietress of the shop, a widow,
had left the place yesterday being afraid of the English. *Eh bien*. Hin-
richs and I proceeded to smash a window at the back. We got into the
kitchen and found here a round loaf. From there down to the cellar,
where we took five bottles of wine and four bottles of beer along. Then,
finding all the communicating doors upstairs locked, we broke down one
after another. So we got into the shop. There we found practically
everything we were looking for—socks, shirts, trousers, cigars and so on.
At least 12 lbs. bonbons and 20 lbs. apple cake, very fine stuff, we took to
the company.

Aug. 26.—Blamont. Here H. and I looted a villa; unfortunately nothing
useful fell into our hands except letter paper and stamps.

3rd Sept. 1914.—We fried some eggs and bread we had with us. We got
the owner to give us glasses and had champagne with the eggs.

5th Sept. 1914.—Here we have three roast rabbits which we ate cold, and
the usual champagne and red wine was not missing. . . . I went to
my company (*at La Fère Gauche*) with the rest of my goods over my arm
and lay down in my overcoat in the garden to sleep on the green silk
eiderdown bed which I had brought along

FRITZ HOLLMANN.

1st Squadron, 2nd Westphalian Hussar Regiment, No. 11, 9th Cavalry
Division, 7th Army Corps. [*Extract from letter dated October 11th and
written from near Lille.*]—The only good thing is that one need not be
thirsty here. We drink five or six bottles of champagne a day, and as to
underlinen—only silk, as if one has no more underlinen, one simply goes
into a house and changes.

STEPHAN LUTHER.

[*Einjähriger, 1st Mounted Battery Regiment No. 3*]:—

12th Aug. 1914. (Halen).—Conditions in the village indescribable. Near
Rossoux on the 17th wine by the cask. We live like God in France; the
villa of a Belgian general supplies everything.

MATERN.

4th Company of the Jager No. 11 from Marburg:—

Aug. 26.—Eggs, wine and especially champagne we fairly bathed in.

Aug. 27th.—This night we lived gorgeously and had a fine time. We had champagne, cream, poultry and wine.

JOH. VAN DER SCHOOT.

Reservist of the 10th Company, 39th Reserve Infantry Regiment, 7th Reserve Army Corps:—

Aug. 19.—In the morning at Utterich: Wynken, 10 o'clock, marched out; quartered University. . . . boozed through the streets of Liège, lie on straw, enough booze, little food, or we must steal.

Aug. 24th.—At noon with 36 men on sentry duty. Sentry duty is A I, no post allocated to me. Our occupation, apart from bathing, is eating and drinking. We live like God in Belgium.

Aug. 26th.—In the afternoon at 4.30 we crossed the French frontier amidst great cheering. . . . Now come the good hours. Eggs, wine, and especially champagne we fairly bathed in. We have never had such a time after four days of starvation.

Aug. 27.—This night we lived gorgeously and had a fine time. We had champagne, cream, poultry, and wine.

JAGER TENSETAN.

1st Sept. 1914.—Soissons. Everything usable is taken along. Wine is literally treated like water.

WESTPHAL.

No christian name. Address: Minhaus District, Oldenburg, Holstein:—

3rd Sept., Thursday.—Crossed the Marne. A fine town, remained for the night. We broke open a dwelling-house; [*the name of a soldier illegible*] and I captured food of all descriptions and other things. Much champagne also was captured.

The importance of these extracts is that they were made by men who were keeping a contemporary record of what was taking place without having any prevision that one day these documents would possess high evidential value. They demonstrate the truth of the accusations of the Belgian Commission. They furnish the best evidence of the behaviour of the German Army, and they reveal a state of things which must shock the conscience of every reader.

The conclusion to which one comes with reluctance is that it suited the purpose of the Authorities to permit this indulgence in that it made the men the readier instruments of oppression.

It has been stated that the German White Book wholly disregards the charge of drunkenness. In the evidence it treats in the same manner the allegation of pillage. German officers and men were accused of having thieved habitually, and of having sent the proceeds of their robberies by wagons and trains to Germany. As will be seen later there is one illuminating reference to it in the pages of the White Book.

The authorities cannot have failed to perceive its relevance, because the Belgians were repeatedly asserting that pillage provided a motive for the German soldiers to allege firing by civilians—such soldiers knowing perfectly well that there would be no preliminary enquiry, and that the order to murder, rob and destroy would immediately be given.

The charge of the raping of women also formed no part of the investigation, unless the testimonials given from time to time by one or other of the officers as to the humanity, kindness and good behaviour of his men were intended to be an indirect refutation of this allegation.

The avoidance of any enquiry into these two grave charges is on the same footing as their treatment of the accusation of drunkenness. All three were too notorious and dangerous to be touched on.

The "Memorandum" with which the White Book opens, starts with the assumption that the civilian population of Belgium as a whole indulged in an "unorganised people's war." The writer who is evidently a jurist or soldier of high standing embarks upon an academical discussion of the conditions under which International Law permits an organised and an unorganised people's war. In a spirit of perfect seriousness he puts forward reasons why the Belgian Government are to blame for the events which happened. According to this remarkable apologist the Belgian Government "had sufficient time for an organisation of the "People's War as required by International Law. For years the "Belgian Government has had under consideration that at the "outbreak of a Franco-German war it would be involved in the "operations; the preparation of mobilisation began, as can be "proved, at least a week before the invasion of the German "Army. The Government was, therefore, fully able to provide "military badges and responsible leaders for that portion of the "civilian population which it intended to use in possible fights."

True to the German principle of never stating awkward facts, he omits to remind his reader that the German Minister stated to the Belgian Government that he saw no reason to anticipate any invasion of Belgium at a time when the ultimatum to Belgium must have been already decided upon. It was in fact presented to the Belgian Government within 48 hours of this assurance. In no part of the memorandum can any reference be found to the guaranteed neutrality of Belgium. The belief of the Belgian Government that their territory would be held inviolable was in itself sufficient to negative any necessity to organise the civilian population. The official documents of that time clearly expose the falsity of the charge made against the Belgian Government of connivance or encouragement to resistance, for on August 1st, 1914, the Minister of the Interior notified every burgomaster that "Belgium had decided to defend her neutrality, and that it was necessary to forbid any manifestation of sympathy or antipathy towards either one country or the other" (p. xi., Belgian Report). The evidence which the Belgian and English Governments have collected is such as to justify the statement that with very few individual exceptions, the Belgian population obeyed these orders, and were in fact unarmed, and that it certainly nowhere offered any planned collective resistance.

AERSCHOT.

The memorandum makes a special point of the "particularly frightful character" of the conflicts in Aerschot, Andenne, Dinant, Louvain, and the evidence in connection with these and one or two other towns, forms the most important and interesting part of the publication. The happenings at the first-named town are described at the head of the summarising report as the "Belgian Insurrection at Aerschot, on August 19th and 20th, 1914." Witnesses of very high military standing were called, and their evidence purports to present a full and truthful picture. The narrative centres round the death of Col. Stenger. He appears to have been shot whilst quartered in the house of the burgomaster. For some portions of some hours previously he had been seated on the balcony in the view of the inhabitants, and at about 8 o'clock was apparently not far from the open window of his room. The German theory is that he met his death from shots fired by civilians from one of the opposite houses.

On the other hand it is said that there was no firing by any civilian, but that the Germans were drunk and started firing upon each other (p. 17, Belgian Report). Whichever it was, the fact remains that the White Book does not record the death of

any other German soldier, and only one witness suggests that there were any casualties occasioned by the civilian population.

The vengeance taken by the Germans for the supposed murder of Colonel Stenger is, on their own evidence, shocking and indiscriminating. Captain Karge is first in importance of the Aerschot witnesses. His proof is extraordinarily interesting, and gives one a vivid impression of the German point of view. One sees him day and night haunted by franc-tireurs. Any rumour of misdeeds of the civilian population, however extravagant, is sure of a hearty welcome from him. It has been suggested that it was part of the policy of the high military authorities to inculcate throughout all ranks the belief that the Army would be attacked on every opportunity by the citizens. On this supposition all shots from unexpected quarters were ascribed to franc-tireurs, even if the Belgian or French Army were known to be within range. Thus a lieutenant, writing on October 23rd, 1914, says: "Some aviators flew over us and several infantry bullets whistled over our heads. It was assumed that they came from franc-tireurs."⁽¹⁾ This theory bit deep into Captain Karge, and in his evidence he describes how he butchered 88 persons without any form of trial. He does not assert that any of them had personally been guilty of firing or were found with weapons, but he is convinced that franc-tireurs were at work. He tells us how he observed regular volleys from 8 or 10 rifles from a particular house—that he broke into it and set fire to it. As far as can be gathered from the description, the house proved to be an empty one. Certainly no civilians are suggested to have been found by any of the soldiers who went upstairs to assist in its destruction. His methods are instructive and cannot be better described than in his own words: "Thereupon, I pushed into the house with the others, and using a fairly large quantity of turpentine, which was found in a can of about 20 litres capacity, and which I had poured out partly on the first story and on the stairs down to the ground floor, succeeded in a very short time in setting the house on fire. Further, I had ordered the men not taking part in this to guard the entrance of the house and to arrest all male persons escaping from it. When I left the burning house, several civilians, including a young priest had been arrested from the adjoining houses. I had these brought to the market place where, in the meantime, my company of field gendarmes had collected. I then put the columns on the march out of the town, took command of all prisoners, among whom I set free the women, boys, and girls. I was commanded by a staff officer (a section commander of the Field Artillery Regiment No. 17) to shoot the prisoners. Then I

(1) Diary No. 29. Appendix B of the English Report.

"made some of my gendarmes arrange the columns and keep them in motion out of the town, while others escorted the prisoners and took them out of the town. Here, at the exit, a house was burning, and by the light of it I had the culprits—88 in number, after I had separated out three cripples—shot."

Although "mad firing" is alleged to have broken out, little seems to have come of it. Indeed, Captain Karge says that the fact that firing came from roof openings or prepared openings in the lofts of the houses explains "the smallness of the damage done by shots to men and animals." The execution of 88 people was, however, far too light a blood tax, and later the male inhabitants of Aerschot were rounded up again, and, without any enquiry, every third man was shot. Amongst these victims were the burgomaster, his son, and the brother of the burgomaster. Colonel Jenrich, another witness, referring to the second group of men, says that their complicity in the attack on the troops was "proved." When, how, and before whom? He gives no details—nothing but the bare assertion. The events which led up to the execution of these men has been spoken to by a very large number of the surviving inhabitants of Aerschot and neighbourhood. These people gave their evidence in Belgium and in England. The very words of the witnesses examined in England are to be found in the Appendix—Report of Lord Bryce's Committee A, c 1 to c 40. None of these witnesses were made acquainted with the evidence which had been previously given. Some of them were amongst the prisoners whom Colonel Jenrich says were "proved" to have taken part in the attack on the German troops. They deny that there was any enquiry—they deny that they or anyone to their knowledge engaged in hostilities, or had the means to do so.

The Belgian Commission naturally paid considerable attention to the circumstances under which the burgomaster, his son, and brother were murdered. The German account deserves study. According to the evidence, Captain Schwartz arrived at Aerschot on the 19th of August to find quarters for the staff. He says: "The burgomaster of Aerschot indicated his house in the market place as the best quarters. I went into the house and was received in the most friendly manner by the burgomaster's wife."

Colonel Jenrich, who was to be the Commandant of the town, sent for the burgomaster. Quite naively he puts the interview on record: "I drew," says he, "his attention to the consequences which would follow for him personally and for the town in case anything was undertaken by the population against the German

"troops; in particular I left him in no doubt that he would suffer the penalty of death if an attack on the German troops by the inhabitants took place." Colonel Jenrich carried out these threats—he killed the burgomaster, and his troops destroyed and sacked the town.

After the death of Colonel Stenger, the burgomaster's house was subjected to a thorough search: "In the cellar," says Captain Schwartz, "was a conspicuous trestle in front of a window opening on the street from which the shooting must have taken place. The window pane was completely shattered. In the course of searching the living rooms the son of the burgomaster came to me out of a dark room. I personally handed him over to the guard in the market place." Captain Schwartz appears to have attached importance to the fact that a trestle was underneath the window, and that the window pane was broken. The natural place for a trestle, or table, or whatever it was, would, in an underground cellar, be near the light, and the "complete shattering" of the window pane points rather to the fact of it having been broken by bullets from outside, it being part of the German case (Captain Folz' evidence) that the window panes of the sitting room of the same house had been broken by shots from without. No cartridge cases were found in the cellar, and the thorough search to which the house was subjected failed to discover any weapons. Nevertheless, the burgomaster's son, a lad of 15½ years of age, was arrested and shot the next morning with his father and uncle.

The summarising report alleges "the complicity of the whole of the burgomaster's family" in the alleged insurrection, but there is not one shred of evidence in the German depositions which attempts to connect the burgomaster, his wife or brother with any act of hostility to the German troops.

The evidence as regards the son is of the flimsiest character, certainly no evidence that a jury would entertain for a moment. The Germans did not deem it necessary to hold any investigation. As for the burgomaster, he is said by the Belgian witnesses to have been a prudent and a peaceable man—quite the last person to have been guilty of treachery or deceit. At the very moment of his execution, placards, which had been posted up by his order, were upon the walls of the town exhorting the citizens to be calm and give no offence, and warning them to abstain from all hostile acts (p. 3, Belgian Report). The brother of the burgomaster seems to have met his fate from the mere fact of his relationship to the burgomaster. At all events, no single act of wrongdoing, or complicity in wrongdoing, is ascribed to him.

The German evidence in relation to Aerschot sufficiently condemns itself, and is open to the following criticisms:—

- (1) The all important fact that despite the charges made by the Belgian Government, no question is asked of any of the witnesses, nor any reference made by them as to the sobriety or discipline of their troops.
- (2) No mention is made of the first entry of the German army in the morning of August 19th, on which occasion they are alleged immediately to have shot five or six inhabitants in the Rue de Marteau and burned several houses.
- (3) Except Colonel Stenger, apparently no German lives were lost in the "insurrection."
- (4) None of the machine guns alleged to have been used by the Belgians were found.
- (5) No witness is called to speak to the capture by him or in his presence of a single armed Belgian civilian.
- (6) No names are given of any persons asserted to have fired on the Germans.
- (7) None of the eight or ten of Captain Karge's alleged riflemen were found in the house opposite the burgo-master.
- (8) No trial or enquiry, either collectively or individually, of the first and second groups of men executed, in all about 150.
- (9) Finally, no mention of the systematic sacking of the town so vividly and forcibly described in the Belgian Report.

ANDENNE.

For about a week from August the 19th, the German army, animated seemingly by a common impulse, were murdering, looting and destroying property in many towns and villages of Belgium. A very clear picture of the events at Andenne had already been published by the Belgian Commission, and specific instances of brutalities given, which, prior to August, 1914, would have been beyond belief. The Germans misconducted themselves on their first entry into the town. The results of their occupation were that 300 persons were massacred in Andenne and its immediate neighbourhood, and about 300 houses destroyed. Almost every house was sacked and the pillage continued for eight days. "Other places," says the Belgian Report, "have suffered more than Andenne, but no other Belgian town was the theatre of so

many scenes of ferocity and cruelty. The numerous inhabitants whom we have cross-examined are unanimous in asserting that the German troops were not fired upon. They told us that no German soldier was killed either at Andenne or in its neighbourhood. They are incapable of understanding the causes of the catastrophe which has ruined their town, and to explain it they give various hypotheses. Some think that Andenne was sacrificed merely to establish a reign of terror, and quote words uttered by officers which seemed to them to show that the destruction of the place was premeditated. Others think that the destruction of the bridge, the ruining of a neighbouring tunnel, and the resistance of the Belgian troops were the causes of the massacre. All protest that nothing happened in the place to excuse the conduct of the Germans."

The testimony by which the Germans seek to answer the Belgian accusations and hope to convince the world that they acted at Andenne with justice, is so remarkable as to render it expedient to set out a considerable portion of it. The Summarising Report is presumably the joint production of Major Bauer and Dr. Wagner, Counsellor of the Supreme Court of Justice. Its language is exaggerated and hysterical. As at Aerschot, so at Andenne, it is an "insurrection"—"the demeanour of the inhabitants was positively devilish"—"A furious fire broke out on all sides on the unsuspecting troops" "Hand-bombs and hand grenades were rained down on the defenceless (?) men nearest at hand" "Machine guns sent their murderous bullets into the files of the soldiery."

From this summary, one would infer that the German Army at Andenne was decimated. What, however, does Major Freiherr von Langermann say? "Our losses were singularly small; the inhabitants had aimed very badly." Major von Polentz describes how his troops "were fired on from all sides at once." He does not mention the death or even the wounding of any man as a consequence of this concentrated attack, but he does say that many of his men were injured by scalds from water poured from the houses.

Private Hugo Roleff is the next witness. He states that he was wounded, but this was apparently an injury received from being tipped off a wagon. He and his comrades "were subjected to a murderous rifle fire from all windows and from all sides. Hand bombs and hand grenades were hurled at us, and we were also shot at from machine guns." He tells of no casualties whatever. They, however, "returned the fire at once as we had been warned to be cautious, and, therefore, went prepared." He and his comrades were no doubt the defenceless men of the Summarising Report. Like Captain Karge, of Aerschot, Roleff is

susceptible to rumour, and whilst recovering from his hurt was looked after by German families who had been living in the neighbourhood for a long time. They told him that the attack was a pre-arranged one, and "that the priests had announced the "necessary instructions from the pulpit." Similarly, Major Freiherr von Langermann, when giving his official written statement, gravely records: "As we were afterwards informed, a "document was found on the Mayor, I believe on the day following, from which it is evident that the attack of the population "on us had been planned to the last detail, and was to take place "at a definite hour."

It does not appear that the military authorities thought it worth while to follow up these slipshod allegations of Roleff and von Langermann. They can hardly have been blind to the importance of establishing their truth. If true, both were capable of proof, and would, at least, have lessened the criminality of the Army in its admitted treatment of the unhappy people of Andenne. The authorities, however, seem to have thought that their case wanted some reinforcement, and commissioned Lieutenant Götze to repair to Andenne and interrogate some of the survivors. The Burgomaster handed him a list of 234 persons who had been shot. Lieutenant Götze is a stylist who chooses his adverbs with care: "An examination of this "list," says he, "proved that *only* in the case of 196 persons "is it absolutely certain that they were shot; 28 were *merely* "missing." Lieutenant Götze sets out the success which attended his enquiry, and presumably the German authorities consider negative results of value. At all events, the statements taken are considered worthy of inclusion in the Report: "I "required," says he, "the burgomaster to summon a number of "credible witnesses who, in his opinion, were in a position to "relate anything regarding the facts. Thereupon there "appeared:—(1) Hermann Frerard, Place du Perron, tradesman, who could not declare anything, because he had been a "prisoner from August 21st to 23rd. (2) Alexander Wery, "tradesman, of Rue Brun, declares that he remained hidden "during the days of excitement, and therefore knew nothing "about it all except hearsay. (3) Leon Lambert, tradesman, of "Place des Tilleuls, knows nothing of the incidents, because "he was hiding in his cellar all the time. (4) Florent Debrun, "manager of a manufactory, of Rue Wouters, was in the garden "with his brother-in-law, Dr. Melin, of Grande Rue, on "August 20th, at about 7 o'clock in the evening. An aeroplane, "he said, appeared at a very great height, and the German "troops fired at it at once. Suddenly firing was heard from "all sides in the town. (5) Mme. Ermine Blanchart, Rue de

"l'Hotel de Ville, wanted to bring up personal complaints, but
 "know nothing of the incidents. (6) Ernst Thys, tradesman,
 "Rue Brun, had been hiding for five days in his cellar. (7)
 "Isidor Loroy, a doctor, Rue de l'Industrie, only knows that
 "the burgomaster, Camus, who in his private capacity was a
 "doctor, was shot on August 20th in the Rue du Pont, after
 "being brought as a hostage to the Town Hall with the Curé
 "the night before, and released towards the morning. He knew
 "nothing of the incidents save by rumour. (8) Paul Tillmann,
 "druggist, of Rue Brun, was wounded from August 21st onwards
 "and cannot make any statement. (9) Louis Cartiaux, Curé,
 "Place du Chapitre, on August 19th, at 9 o'clock, was taken
 "prisoner and conducted to the Town Hall. Here he met Burgo-
 "master Camus, who was already arrested as a hostage. Cartiaux
 "was, however, released that night. As to the alleged incidents,
 "he can only report that as early as September a detachment of
 "troops had made an investigation, and that three suspects had
 "been arrested, who, however, were not inhabitants of Andenne.
 "What had been these men's lot he did not know. Regarding
 "the case of the boy who was said to have been shot because
 "he was carrying a cartridge, he referred to a teacher, George
 "Belin, Rue Bertrand, who had told him that a boy had been
 "shot because he was wearing on his watch chain a bullet which
 "he had received from his brother. (10) Achilles Rambeaux,
 "notary's assistant, Rue Bertrand, cannot make any report
 "because he was hiding in his cellar. (11) The teacher,
 "G. Belin, mentioned under Head 9, was examined on
 "January 6th, at Namur, and asked whether he was willing
 "to confirm by oath his reported statement as to the shooting of
 "a boy. He denies in the very strongest terms that he ever
 "made any such statement. With very great reserve he further
 "states that the general opinion at Andenne is that a Belgian
 "soldier of the 8th Regiment of the Line had remained behind,
 "put on civilian clothing, and had, in fact, fired on German
 "troops. This soldier was generally known amongst the popu-
 "lation under the nickname 'Le Petit Roux,' and was a Fleming.
 "Another Flemish soldier, also in civilian dress, had been found
 "in his company. Both had deserted from their detachment."

The entire justification for the horrors perpetrated at Andenne
 rests upon the evidence of von Langermann, von Polentz, Roleff,
 and the material collected by Lieutenant Götze. On the strength
 of these statements, does anyone believe that the civilian popula-
 tion of Andenne were in possession of bombs, hand grenades, and
 machine guns, or that any attack was made upon the troops,
 except possibly by one or two men? That Roleff heard the
 characteristic sound of the last-mentioned weapon there is little

doubt. But was it not the German machine gun engaged in piling up the list of 234 dead, of whom "only 196 were shot, 28 were merely missing?" A Belgian refugee who gave evidence in England stated that "the Germans were for the most part "drunk, and they were stationed before the houses firing with "their rifles into the doors and windows." He also says that several machine guns were used by the Germans in various streets of the town. (See b Appendix to Report of Lord Bryce's Committee, V. 2.)

Again, as in the Aerschot evidence, one finds:—

1. Silence on the question of the sobriety and discipline of the troops.
2. Silence on the looting of property.
3. No hand grenades, bombs or machine guns found.
4. No civilians captured in any houses or in the streets with weapons of any description.
5. No enquiry as to the guilt or innocence of any of the Belgians who were killed or wounded.
6. No names of any Germans alleged to have been killed, and, indeed, no allegation that any were killed.

DINANT.

Exactly the same scenes of carnage, destruction, and robbery, were taking place in Dinant during that fateful week which commenced with the Aerschot murders on August the 19th. The need for the German Army to push through was imperative. On the 15th of August an engagement took place between the French troops on the left bank of the Meuse and the Germans coming up from the east. The French pushed the Germans back and followed them across the river. For six days nothing of importance happened, but by the 21st, the French had re-crossed the river and were in position on the left bank. This set-back of the Germans on the 15th, with the consequent dislocation of their time table, no doubt grievously enraged them and affords a motive for the conduct of the Germany Army. Some hint of this annoyance creeps out in the Summarising Report. After speaking of the hostility of the population, they say, "in judging the "attitude which the troops of the 12th Corps took against such "population, our starting point must be that the tactical object "of the 12th Corps was to cross the Meuse with speed and to "drive the enemy from the left bank of the Meuse; speedily to

“overcome the opposition of the inhabitants who were working
 “in direct opposition to this, was a military necessity, and
 “*something to be striven for in every way.*”

The Belgian Report sets out that immediately on the entry of the Germany Army on the evening of the 21st of August, the advanced guard began firing into the windows, murdered one or two persons, entered the cafés, seized the liquor, got drunk, and retired after having set fire to several houses and broken the doors and windows of others. The population was terrorised and stupefied, and shut itself up in its dwellings.

It was not, however, until Sunday, August the 23rd, that the inhabitants felt the full force of the German fury. On that day the soldiers of the 108th Regiment invaded the Church of the Premonastrensian Fathers, separated the men from the women, and shot 50 of them.

Eighty-four more were murdered in the square, and almost all the men of the Faubourg de Ieffe were executed *en masse*. From the 21st to the 25th, more than 700 inhabitants were killed, others were taken to Germany, and 200 houses alone remained out of 1,400. “While a certain number of soldiers were perpetrating this massacre, others pillaged and sacked the houses of the town, and broke open all safes, sometimes blasting them with dynamite. Their work of destruction and theft accomplished, the soldiers set fire to the houses, and the town was soon no more than an immense furnace” (p. 92, Belgian Report).

The executions were not preceded by any inquiry or pretence of a trial.

In view of the terrible indictment which the Belgian Report drew against the German Government, and which later was fully corroborated by the Report of the English Committee, one naturally turns with interest to the German defence to see how the matter is dealt with. The Summarising Report admits that: “The flourishing town of Dinant with its suburbs was burnt to a very large extent and laid in ruins, and a large number of human lives lost.” According to the German view, the inhabitants had only themselves to thank for these results in that they participated in the fighting. The Summarising Report is couched in the same language of frenzy as the analyses of the events at Aerschot and Andenne: “Shots were fired from all the houses and all the heights.” Again: “Shots were received from

"all the houses, although in many of them no one was found." And again: "The opposition was of the greatest obstinacy. It was conducted with every sort of military weapon—rifles, sporting guns, bows, small shot, revolvers, knives, stones." The undiscovered machine guns used at Aerschot and Andenne are again a feature of the armament of the civilian population, and their opposition "proves that the organisation had the support of the Belgian Government." The proof would be much more satisfactory if machine guns had been discovered in any one of the many towns in which they are uniformly alleged to have been used.

There is, however, one fact which does appear to be satisfactorily proved by those depositions. Three witnesses were put forward who spoke to having received wounds from shot guns. They gave their evidence with apparent sincerity, and there seems no reason to doubt the accuracy of their evidence. There was a certain amount of hearsay evidence to the effect that other men were similarly wounded, but the united testimony does not in any way justify the assumption that the civilian population as a whole, or any considerable body of them were guilty of firing upon the Germans. The shot wounds which are spoken of could easily have been inflicted by two or three acting independently of each other. Broadly speaking, there is nothing in the depositions which satisfies the mind that the casualties amongst the German Army at Dinant, except those occasioned by shot wounds, were bought about by the civilian population, though it is alleged by one witness that German soldiers were scalded by water poured from the houses. If this allegation is true, it most certainly ought to have been followed up and put beyond doubt. In ascribing the casualties to the misdeeds of the civilian population, nearly all the witnesses overlook the fact that the French were on the left bank of the Meuse, were possessed certainly of rifles of long range, and presumably of machine guns. Probably also from the heights they were able to fire over the roofs of many of the houses, and this fact alone may account for the summary executions which took place, when men were dragged out of houses and shot without parley, it being believed by overwrought troops that the shots came from the houses themselves.

The barbarities which stand out in the Dinant depositions themselves relate mainly to the murder of a large number of admittedly innocent people at Les Rivages by order of the Commander of the Grenadier Regiment No. 101, and to the execution of about 100 people, alleged to have been guilty, on the order of Count Kielmannsegg, and the slaughter of the men at Neffe under

the direction of Captain Wilke. It is remarkable that the Germans should have given these stories to the world and unconsciously perpetuated conclusive records of their cruelty.

The summarising report sets out briefly the shooting of the hostages: the depositions amplify it: "The commander of the Grenadier Regiment No. 101 made sure of a large number of persons out of the nearest houses in order to use them as hostages in the event of any hostile action by the population. It was made clear to them that they would answer with their lives for the safety of the troops . . . the men were put up against a garden wall to the left of the Ferry Station; and the women and children taken with them out of the houses a little further down stream. In the meantime, the crossing the river and building the bridge went on. When the bridge was advanced some 40 metres, out of the houses of Les Rivages and the rocky eminences close by, south of the 'Rocher Bayard,' some franc-tireurs fired on the Grenadiers, who were in close masses waiting to cross, and the Pioneers who were at work. The consequence was a great commotion and confusion. In consequence of this, all the male hostages assembled against the garden wall were shot." It will be noticed that there was "commotion and confusion," but no injuries are alleged to have been sustained by the troops, nor any evidence that the firing, if it took place at all, was the work of franc-tireurs.

The extract from the despatch of the 3rd Field Pioneer Company says: "The village appeared to be perfectly peaceful, nevertheless, for the sake of security, a number of the inhabitants were made prisoners by the Grenadiers." Captain Ermisch gives substantially the same story, saying that the Grenadiers collected the civilians who were standing round as hostages, and that at about 4 or 5 o'clock they were suddenly subjected to a fairly heavy fire which came from the slopes to the right and left of the side valley, and especially from a red house not far from the Bayard Rock. He does not suggest that any of his soldiers suffered any casualties, and he concludes his evidence by saying: "As a result, the hostages were shot on the order of a senior Grenadier officer." Several witnesses speak to the heap of bodies that lay there, and there can be no question whatever that on this occasion Les Rivages, the Germans shot, as hostages, men, women and children. Lieutenant von Rochow states that he arrived at Les Rivages at nightfall on the 23rd and saw at the Ferry a great heap of bodies. He continues: "In the course of the evening, when the crossing had been begun, and things were quieter, we noticed that several wounded people were lying among them. These were brought away. I myself took a girl of about eight years who had a wound in her face,

“and an elderly woman who had been shot in the upper part of the thigh to the women who had been taken prisoners, and handed them over to a doctor.” Staff-Surgeon Dr. Petrenz came on this great heap of bodies without knowing who had shot them: “I have heard,” he says, “that the Grenadier Regiment No. 101 carried out an execution there. Among the people who were shot were some women, but by far the greater number were young lads. Under the heap I discovered a girl of about five years of age, alive and without any injuries. I took her out and brought her down to the house where the women were. She took chocolate, was quite happy, and was clearly unaware of the seriousness of the situation. I then searched the heap of bodies to see whether any other children were underneath. But we only found one girl of about ten years of age who had a wound in the lower part of the thigh. I had her wound dressed and brought her at once to the women.”

From these extracts it will be gathered that the ferocity of the Germans reached its height at Dinant. It is not difficult to reconstruct the dreadful scenes of havoc and destruction which took place on August the 23rd, and the wild excitement to which the German army was a prey. Captain Wilke's evidence reveals him as emotional and neurotic. He speaks to having approached a factory, realised that he was being fired at and turned back. “Only my fastest pace enabled me to escape the shots which fell around me *as thick as hail* on the wall of rock.” Then he took the foremost group of a company, and he and the men were again attacked and sought cover. “This I succeeded in doing *without losses* although I was still vigorously aimed at on this occasion as well.” Later on the same day he “received orders to clear the houses without remorse”—at another time the Brigade Commander “enjoined me to proceed without mercy,” and at about 11 p.m., at Leffe, he met Divisional Commander Edler von der Planitz, “who again urged me to proceed with the utmost ruthlessness, and the most energetic means against the fanatical franc-tireurs.” Captain Wilke speaks to one casualty only amongst the German soldiers. He regarded his task as having been accomplished “after about 50 men had been shot and the principal street at Leffe had been made impassable in view of the burning houses.” Extracts from German diaries fill in the picture: “Cavalry and Marburg Jagers ravaged terribly in the surrounding villages.” Matbern, himself a Marburg Jager, makes the following entry: “August 23rd, Sunday (between Birnal and Dinant, village of Disonge).—At 11 o'clock the order comes to advance after the artillery has thoroughly prepared the ground ahead. The Pioneers and Infantry Regiment 178 were marching in front of us. Near a small village

"the latter were fired on by the inhabitants. About 220 inhabitants were shot, and the village was burnt—artillery is continuously shooting—the village lies in a large ravine. Just now, 6 o'clock in the afternoon, the crossing of the Maas begins near Dinant. All villages, chateaux, and houses are burnt down during this night. It was a beautiful sight to see the fires all around us in the distance."

As a fitting conclusion of the events of Sunday, August the 23rd, Moritz Groose of the Infantry Regiment 177 recalls how on the evening of that day the troops sang

"Nun danket alle Gott!"

The results of the methodical terrorism of the German army at Dinant are described in the 11th Report of the Belgian Commission on January the 16th, 1915:

"To sum up, the town of Dinant is destroyed. It counted 1,400 houses; only 200 remain. The manufactories where the artisan population worked have been systematically destroyed. Rather more than 700 of the inhabitants have been killed; others have been taken off to Germany, and are still retained there as prisoners. The majority are refugees scattered all through Belgium. A few who remained in the town are dying in hunger. It has been proved by our Enquiry that German soldiers, while exposed to the fire of the French entrenched on the opposite bank of the Meuse, in certain cases sheltered themselves behind a line of civilians, women and children."

LOUVAIN.

The world will learn with some surprise that the accusations levelled against the German troops with regard to the destruction of Louvain, and the indiscriminate slaughter of its citizens, are devoid of truth. The authorities for this statement are Major Bauer and Dr. Wagner, who, as in the cases of Aerschot, Andenne and Dinant, are responsible for the text of the Summarising Report. Far from the Germans having committed any outrages in Louvain, either as against persons or property, "it is proved to the contrary that the German troops have acted in a way free of reproach and have committed no action contrary to International law." Major von Klewitz assures the Court that "the behaviour of the troops in Louvain was exemplary." Now, although it is admitted that the German troops fired into houses and windows, used artillery on the town and set fire to many houses, time and time again the witnesses lay stress upon the fact that this did not occur until the inhabitants had fired upon them. Of the 50 witnesses, Captain van Sandt and Lance-Corporal Messelke alone deal with the Belgian assertion that the real

commencement of the disturbance amongst the troops was the firing by the Germans upon each other by mistake. Captain Sandt refers to the firing by inhabitants, and says; "It is perfectly out of the question, as I maintain on my oath, that our troops at Louvain should before that have shot in mistake against one another." Lance-Corporal Messelke is less emphatic, and says that the troops marching into Louvain were not mistaken for Belgians. He makes the rather significant statement: "We did not hear any shots in the town whilst marching back." He and other witnesses saw rockets, which they took to be signals for the attack. Proof that the Germans fired on each other not infrequently is provided by the diaries in Appendix B of the Report of Lord Bryce's Committee. Clepp, on August 22nd, says that two infantry regiments shot at each other, with the result that nine were killed and fifty wounded. Another diarist (No. 14) records that the 114th Regiment "take us for Frenchmen. By blowing German bugle signals and singing the 'Wacht am Rhein,' we finally put some sense into these fellows and they stop shooting." Again, the German Red Cross Company, "in spite of calling out and whistling, were fired on again and again by our own troops. (Diary No. 27.)

On the 25th of August an engagement between German and Belgian troops took place on the road to Malines at Bueken and Herent. At nightfall, according to the Belgian Report, the German troops having been repulsed, entered Louvain in great disorder. The German garrison which occupied Louvain had, according to several witnesses, been erroneously informed the enemy were entering the town. In the gathering darkness the oncoming and retreating forces met each other, and firing broke out. In one street a priest counted 60 dead Germans, no dead civilians being seen amongst them. "The German troops," says the Belgian Report, "were firing in all directions in the deserted streets. It was a real panic, during which the officers had lost control of their men." (p. 26). This Belgian allegation of an inter-German conflict finds the strongest corroboration from the witnesses whose evidence was laid before Lord Bryce's Committee. (See E.8, e1, e2, e4, e5. Appendix to the Report.)

At Louvain as elsewhere there is one piece of evidence which recurs with the most remarkable frequency. Officers and men swear that they broke into house after house and captured civilians on the premises "with weapons in their hands." The phrase is to be found again and again, and the number of civilians thus spoken of cannot be far short of one hundred. The most astonishing circumstance, however, is this, that under no circumstances are those civilians ever alleged to have used those

weapons on the soldiers whilst they were entering or when they had entered the house. No German is ever alleged to have sustained any injury whatever from these civilians whilst effecting their arrest. The depositions leave one entirely in doubt as to what took place when the men met face to face. All that we are told is that the soldiers broke into a house, came on a civilian "with a weapon in his hand," dragged him out and shot him. Armed though they were, they seemingly submit to the battering in of their door, always spoken of as locked, and cravenly permit themselves to be captured. Apparently also the Germans, although seeing the civilian armed, rarely, if ever, shoot him at sight, but are willing to take the risk of his killing them as they climb staircases and enter rooms in pursuit of him. A civilian who heard the breaking-in of his door, and did not propose to defend himself would have ample time to throw any weapon away, and the ordinary inference is that if he was armed at the moment of capture, he intended to use his weapon to the last against those invading his premises. On two, possibly three occasions, an officer speaks to seeing a weapon produced by a soldier who said he had taken it from a civilian.

One or two characteristic examples will demonstrate the unreality of the stories, and in the 30 or 40 depositions in which this class of case is alleged, grave doubts arise as to the credibility and good faith of the witness. The civilians may have been shot, possibly because they stood in the way of the soldiers when looting or wishing to commit other acts. A very large number of instances can be given, but the three following are fair examples:—

Musketeer Robert Dreher says that on the night of August the 25th at Louvain, "We entered the houses from which
"the shots had been fired and fetched from them five or six
"civilians, *all* of whom still had revolvers in their hands.
"These later were shot at the railway station."

Lance-corporal Einax remembers that at Dinant "Out of
"one house out of which shots came eight men were dragged
"out."

An extract from the despatch of the Infantry Regiment No. 178 says: "At 8.30 about 20 inhabitants once again
"shot at us south of the barracks of the 13th Belgian
"Infantry Regiment. They were dragged out and shot."

There is one circumstance of which a large number of German witnesses are quite confident. That is, that at Louvain, Belgian machine guns were brought into play against them. They do not set out any casualty list which supports that theory, and indeed

at Louvain, as elsewhere, the casualties which they mention are extraordinarily small. The Germans are, however, right in saying that they were under machine gun fire. The unmistakeable regular tak-tak of these weapons could plainly be heard. This is what Lieutenant Duckwitz says: "When I came to Herent, the houses situated on the street were in flames. I also met infantry who told me that I could not get any further, since from the other side our own infantry were shooting into the place with machine guns. The firing indeed was audible."

In addition to the alleged Belgian machine guns, one is invited to believe that bombs were used by the Belgians. Captain von Esmarch heard repeatedly the detonation of what appeared to be heavy guns about him: "I supposed that artillery was firing, but since there was none present there is only one explanation for this, that the inhabitants in their attack upon us from the houses in the square also threw hand grenades." A Belgian refugee, (e1) Appendix to Lord Bryce's Committee, gives the cause of these detonations: "The fires were lit afresh by explosions caused by incendiary bombs thrown into the houses by the soldiers." The evidence is conclusive that the German Army had regular detachments armed with bombs—paraffin syringes and incendiary pastilles and hatchets. From the outset incendiarism was intended to be included in the methods of offence or terrorism. The language of the witnesses, just as that of the Summarising Report, is characterised by the same familiar feature of hyperbole which characterised the evidence relating to Aerschot, Andenne, and Dinant.

Major von Manteuffel, who will be remembered as the officer who on or about August the 19th insisted on the payment of a war indemnity of £4,000 by the City of Louvain, and subsequently reduced it to £120, speaks of the square being filled with troops, when a "tremendous gun fire" was opened upon them. Speaking of the troops, "I believe," he says, "there were three of them wounded, chiefly in the legs." A little later, General Max von Boehn entered the town and was subjected to "a murderous fire." Three were apparently wounded on this occasion, and Major Manteuffel, having recorded this tremendous and murderous fire, concludes his evidence by saying: "I also wish to mention that before the Town Hall a horse was killed by a shot through the head." Others give evidence in just the same strain. For instance, Dr. Berghausen was present when a "fearful firing" opened quite close to him. A few minutes at another spot he and others were subjected to a "murderous fire." He and his men apparently went through with those experiences without suffering any casualties. On neither occasion does he speak to any casualty.

The next witness, Frederick Hullermeier, not examined contemporaneously with Dr. Berghausen, uses exactly the same phraseology: "Fearful firing was opened against us from the surrounding houses, from the windows, from the roof openings, and especially from the roofs." He saw one man and four horses wounded. He adds: "Several soldiers from our company are said to have been seriously wounded." Examined again after an interval of two months, he says: "Many of us were wounded; some of us even received mortal wounds," but he mentions no names, nor is any testimony adduced to corroborate him. The charmed life borne by the German soldier is well demonstrated by the deposition of Ludwig Oldenburg. Like all the rest of them, he and his comrades were suddenly fired upon from the houses right and left of them. He saw the flash of discharges from houses quite close to him: "From one house I also saw bombs thrown. One fell about 10 metres from me in the street and there exploded with a violent detonation. Whether it hit anyone, I do not know." He says that the noise and confusion were very great, and that the firing may have lasted a good hour: "During the firing, I saw a soldier fall in the neighbourhood." The impression which is conveyed to the mind of a reader who carefully studies the depositions relating to Louvain, and who keeps his mind entirely free of knowledge derived from any other source, is that the Germans do establish that in isolated cases injury was caused to members of the German Army by pellets from sporting weapons. Having regard to the mass of soldiers in Louvain and its suburbs the number is insignificant, and (unless they were acting in defence of themselves or their womenkind) such wrongdoers ought to have been rigorously dealt with. Had the Germans confined themselves to this, public opinion would have upheld their action. When one appreciates the awful fate which overtook Louvain and its inhabitants, it is perhaps worth while to set out exactly the casualties alleged to have been caused by "franc tireurs" armed with shot guns:

Lieutenant-Colonel Schweder of the company, states that one n.c.o., and five men were wounded, several of them by shot.

Hilmer says five men of his company were wounded in part by small shot.

Dr. Berghausen speaks of four, and Dr. Keuten of two patients.

Zander speaks of one.

Evidence is given to show that Klönters, Rösseler, Hohne and Kruse suffered similarly.

Disregarding the fact that the men spoken to by Lieutenant-Colonel Schweder and Hilmer were not all injured by pellets, the total comes to 22.

It is part of the German case that the Garde Civique and Belgian soldiers in mufti attacked their troops. In no instance do the authorities ask any of the doctors or alleged victims to come forward and produce such bullets as may have been extracted from the wounds. Nothing would have been easier than to show that the bullet, by reason of its calibre, weight, and make, never could have issued from a German rifle or service pattern revolver. It is hardly likely that so obvious a point escaped the authorities, and the omission tends to show that the injuries from the bullet wounds were received in the manner alleged by the Belgians.

The witnesses take great credit to themselves for having instituted an enquiry into the guilt or innocence of their captives at Louvain. One is privileged to the extent of being permitted to see the curious machinery of the investigation in actual working—and to estimate its value. Richard Gruner describes the procedure. On the night of August 25th, 1914, Richard Gruner was 23 years of age. He is described as a *tradesman* of Hamburg, and was employed as the driver of an ambulance wagon. To this mature judicial functionary, Captain Allbrecht handed over "from 100 to 200 persons or thereabouts who were "given to me for examination and trial." Independently of Gruner three or four more persons were apparently entrusted with similar powers, and Captain Allbrecht during the night of August 25th went to and fro from one to the other enquiring the result of the trial, and then consigned to death the bewildered wretches who had failed to satisfy Gruner and the other judges that they were innocent of any wrongdoing. The point of view with which this young tradesman of 23 undertook the gravest and most momentous duty that can be assigned by one human being to another is admirably described in his own words: "The "persons brought to trial must have acted in some way in a "suspicious manner, otherwise they would never have been "brought to trial at all." Is it remarkable then, that Cardinal Mercier in his pastoral letter should say: "In the Louvain group "of communes, 176 persons, men and women, old men and "sucklings, rich and poor, in health and sickness, were shot or "burnt"?

The enquiry was conducted at night—in the open air, in haste, and amidst confusion and uproar, and even under fire. The witnesses were in all cases on one side only, and that side that of the German army. They were invariably soldiers, undoubtedly excited and enraged, and very possibly unbalanced by having been under fire and by excesses. The word of any two soldiers who stated that a Belgian had fired sent that man to his death. In vain did he urge that no arms were found in his house or cartridges on him—in vain did he ask for breathing space in which to call evidence as to his position and known peaceful character, or other matters which would tend to show that the soldiers were wrongly accusing him. Richard Gruner came to an immediate and invariable decision. The word of two German soldiers was enough—the man was executed. In this way, on Gruner's own figures, from 80 to 100 persons were killed. "Amongst them," he says, "it is possible that there were some 10 or 15 priests."

This is the enquiry—which in itself is nothing short of an outrage—on which the German Government prides itself and talks of the shooting of these people as having been carried out in accordance "with the custom of war."

General von Boehn alleges that at Louvain they were faced with a systematic organisation, and he gives certain facts on which he bases his view. The first one, and that to which apparently he attaches the most importance, is the finding of 300 rifles in a church at Louvain. Apparently the General was not acquainted with the fact that evidence had been given before the Belgian Commission which showed that the Municipal Authorities of Louvain themselves had placed in the church of St. Pierre all the weapons owned by the inhabitants.

There is one passage at the conclusion of the Summarising Report which shows a strange misreading of the Fifth Belgian Report. The extract from the Summarising Report is as follows:

"How little weight the Commission attaches to the stories prepared for it and unfortunately repeated by it without investigation of their trustworthiness is shown in the account of the execution of Bishop Coenraet and Father Schmidt mentioned in the Fifth Report. It speaks itself about the 'alleged' execution and adds, without much ado, the fable that unwilling spectators of this (alleged!) scene were compelled to show their approval by applause. There could be no clearer confession that material which has been hastily collected is used for sensational purposes to the neglect of truth and justice. It should be known that M. Coenraet to the

"present day lives happily with Professor Doctor Poels, at Heerlen, in Holland, and this can hardly have remained unknown to the Belgian Commission."

The Belgian Report did not allege that Bishop Coenraets or Father Schmidt had ever been executed. What they did allege, as asserted by the Report, a "sham execution" of Bishop Coenraet and Father Schmidt. These men were submitted to mental torture, and went through all the stages preliminary to an execution, even to the discharge of rifles, but their lives were intentionally spared. Similar incidents, degrading to the whole of the German army, are mentioned, both in the Belgian Report and in the Appendix to Lord Bryce's Report. Seven men, for instance, were lined up, the five inner men shot, the two outer men allowed to go. A woman was placed in the midst of several men, the men all around her shot, the woman permitted to escape. It is a singular error of judgment on the part of Major Bauer and Dr. Wagner to have revived this incident, and to have grossly distorted it in its revival, and thus again to have brought to the surface recollection of a refinement of cruelty to which they should have been ashamed to refer.

The general conclusions which one draws from the evidence with regard to Louvain are almost identical with those previously set out in the cases of Aerschot, Andenne and Dinant. There is the same absolute silence on the question of drink, the same careful abstention from enquiry into the charge of looting—which was alleged by the Belgian Report to have continued systematically for eight days, and the proceeds to have been carried away on Army vans, and later sent to Germany. Although almost every officer and soldier called before the German authorities must have been competent to deal with this charge, none of them in fact did so. The depositions may be searched through and through for any denial of the charge made in the Belgian Report. Absence of any evidence does not embarrass the authors of the Summarising Report. They dispose of the matter in a sentence: "This statement," they say, "is a sheer invention. The army administration decides what is to be carried by vans and railway wagons, and it has never issued any such order."

Very lightly do the witnesses touch upon the exploits of their corps of Incendiaries. An uninstructed reader would not gather that the City possessed a University, or that irreparable damage had been done to priceless architecture. The Germans, paying no regard to relative values, claim that not even one-sixth part of the town has been destroyed by fire, and unctuously state:

"The destruction of some streets could not be avoided. In this way the Cathedral also caught fire. The further spreading of the fire was stopped

"by our troops who, under the leadership of their officers, took up in a self-sacrificing manner the work of extinguishing it."

The pastoral letter of Cardinal Mercier, the primate of Belgium, should be contrasted with the German official account:

"At Louvain, a third part of the city has been destroyed; 1,074 dwellings have disappeared; on the town land and in the suburbs, Kessel-Loo, Hérent and Herverlé, together 1,823 houses have been burnt. In this dear city of Louvain, ever in my thoughts, the magnificent church of St. Peter will never recover its former splendour. The ancient college of St. Ives, the art schools, the commercial and consular schools of the university; the old markets, our rich library with its collections, its unique and unpublished manuscripts, its archives, its gallery of great portraits of illustrious rectors, chancellors, professors, dating from the time of its foundation, which preserved for masters and students alike a noble tradition and were an incitement to good work—all this accumulation of intellectual, of historic, and of artistic riches, the fruit of the labours of five centuries—all is in the dust."

The German White Book does not burke the fact that hundreds and hundreds of persons were killed by their troops. These outrages belong to the class which were committed in the open and under some show of military usage in support of a deliberate policy of terrorism advocated, as we have seen, by Von Hartmann, the Kaiser, and German military writers. The depositions, however, pay no attention whatever to the excesses of individual soldiers, or of groups of soldiers, which were perpetrated generally and uncontrolledly over so large an area as to prove themselves outrages deliberately permitted in support of the same policy of terrorism.

The broad general conclusion to which one is driven by a perusal of the White Book is that the Belgian Government is right when it condemns the chiefs of the German army for the designed, determined destruction of its subjects and their property.

The inferences and facts which force one to this conclusion may be summarised as follows:—

- (1) Cruelty, as a method of repression, is not repugnant to the mind of the German soldiers and politicians.
- (2) Terrorism is a recognised and legitimate weapon enjoined by German military publicists.
- (3) The remembrance of the policy dictated by the Kaiser in 1900, when the German army was about to embark

upon a minor insignificant expedition, in which a defeat under no possibility could threaten the stability of the German Empire, must have assured the commanders that no degree of barbarity would bring down upon them the censure of their Emperor.

- (4) The teachings of the German War Book inculcated savagery.
- (5) The proclamations of the military authorities in Belgium are conceived in the spirit of cruelty and terrorism.
- (6) The sinister fact that the most striking and terrible of the systematic outrages and destruction of property began approximately on August the 19th, and ended approximately on August the 27th, within which dates occurred the awful events in Aerschot, Andenne, Dinant, and Louvain.
- (7) The actual admissions in the White Book of officers in high command that they ordered groups of civilians to be executed without any form of enquiry.
- (8) The fact that the Germans when they entered Belgium had as part of their regular military organisation, companies of incendiaries provided with hatchets, paraffin syringes, incendiary bombs or grenades, and explosive pastilles.
- (9) The omission in the White Book of any mention of any punishment being inflicted in Belgium on any German soldier for misconduct towards the population.

The motive for massacres was, from the German point of view, an overwhelming one. The terrorism was designed to crush the spirit of the Belgian nation, and to overawe the districts through which their troops had yet to pass. The need for hacking a way through had been imperative from the outset. By the third week in August a speedy passage had become vital to the German plan. The unexpected opposition of the Belgian army was clogging the whole German military machine, thwarting the plan of a decisive blow at France and dissipating the dream of the War Lords, who had calculated on a six months' war, brilliant with hurricane achievements east and west. There was yet time. If the Belgian Government had in the last week of August concluded peace in order to save its people, the Germans without further hindrance could have attacked the French and English, and that part of their army which was masking Antwerp would have been able to take part in the advance.

The publication of the White Book is an amazing official blunder. It serves, however, one useful purpose. Hitherto, the identity of the officers who ordered the murders *en masse* was unknown. Their names now appear in these pages and frequently the very men themselves come forward and depose coldly and callously to acts which have degraded the German army and left a stain upon its banners that generations of chivalry will not efface.

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